

# Employment and Support Allowance: Reasons for Assignment to the Support and Work Related Activity Groups by Primary Health Condition Category

25 January 2013

# Introduction

This statistical release presents information on new claims for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in Great Britain. It provides information on those claims where the claimant is assigned to either the Support Group (SG) or the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) after their initial functional assessment, including those assigned to one of these groups following an appeal. It provides a breakdown of the reasons for assignment to each group by whether the primary health condition is mental or physical. The figures are derived from administrative data held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and assessment data provided by Atos healthcare. This analysis presents information on new claims for ESA only. It does not include information on incapacity benefits reassessments to determine eligibility for ESA.

# Background

A key part of the ESA regime is the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) process, which is used to assess capability for work and eligibility for benefit. Within this Atos Healthcare health care professionals undertake an assessment and, following the assessment, their recommendation is passed on to DWP. A DWP Decision Maker then considers the recommendation, alongside the other evidence relating to the claim, including that provided by the claimant or by a medical practitioner or someone who knows the claimant, when making a decision on the claimant's eligibility for ESA. This outcome can be one of the following:

**Claimants can be found fit for work**, meaning that, despite their illness or disability, they are able to undertake some forms of work. In this case their claim:

- closes and the claimant can move to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA); or
- remains open following receipt of a challenge against the decision (either a reconsideration by DWP, or an appeal to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS)). If redress is sought, the pre-assessment rates remain until closure;

**Claimants can be found to have limited capability for work.** In this instance, they are allowed the benefit and placed in the WRAG. Those in this group are not expected to work, but are provided with help and support to prepare for work where possible. They receive a higher payment than those on JSA. Claimants can also appeal the decision to be put in the WRAG instead of the SG; and

**Claimants can be found to have limited capability for work and, in addition, limited capability for work related activity.** In this situation, claimants are allowed the benefit and placed in the SG. Claimants in this group have the most severe

functional impairments and so are provided with unconditional support and receive a higher rate of benefit than those in the WRAG.

Both WRAG and SG claims run until the initial or latest 'prognosis period' ends, which is usually, but not always, a standard length of time such as 3, 6, 12, 18 or 24 months based on the individual claimant's health, and then have a repeat assessment.

## Results

### Reasons for assignment to the Support Group by mental and physical primary health condition

Table 1 shows SG assignments – at the initial assessment or after appeal – by reason for assignment. The information is further broken down by mental and physical primary health conditions. The statistics cover initial functional assessments for new ESA claims starting between October 2008 and February 2012 (the latest data available). Cases where the primary health condition is missing, of which about 1,000 were assigned to the SG at the initial assessment, have been excluded.

**Table 1: Support Group at functional assessment initially or after appeal split into reasons for assignment and primary medical health conditions, Great Britain (Period: ESA claims starting between October 2008 and February 2012)**

Primary Health Condition	Reason for assignment to the Support Group						
	Chemotherapy	Physical or mental health risk	Pregnancy risk	Severe functional disability	Terminally ill	Other reason	Any reason
<b>Caseload</b>							
Mental	400	38,800	400	24,000	100	10,400	<b>74,000</b>
Physical	25,700	22,900	1,800	53,200	14,000	16,600	<b>134,200</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,100</b>	<b>61,700</b>	<b>2,100</b>	<b>77,200</b>	<b>14,200</b>	<b>27,000</b>	<b>208,200</b>
<b>Percentage of subset caseloads</b>							
Mental	<1%	52%	<1%	32%	<1%	14%	<b>100%</b>
Physical	19%	17%	1%	40%	10%	12%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: The figures are derived from administrative data held by DWP and assessment data provided by Atos Healthcare.

**Notes:**

- (1) The table covers ESA claims starting between October 2008 and February 2012, including actions on these claims up to August 2012. This analysis presents information on new claims for ESA only. It does not contain incapacity benefits reassessments to determine eligibility for ESA.
- (2) The Department only holds information on appeals once they have been heard by HMCTS and the HMCTS decision on the appeal has been made.
- (3) All numbers are rounded to the nearest 100 and percentages are rounded to nearest whole number. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
- (4) Cases where the primary medical condition is missing are excluded.

## Reasons for assignment to the Work Related Activity Group by mental and physical primary health condition

Table 2 shows WRAG assignments – at the initial assessment or after appeal – by reason for assignment. The information is further broken down by mental and physical primary health conditions. The statistics cover initial functional assessments for new ESA claims starting between October 2008 and February 2012 (the latest data available). Cases where the primary health condition is missing, of which about 700 were assigned to the WRAG at the initial assessment, have been excluded.

**Table 2: Work Related Activity Group at functional assessment initially or after appeal split into reasons for assignment and primary medical health conditions, Great Britain (Period: ESA claims starting between October 2008 and February 2012)**

Primary Health Condition	Reason for assignment to the Work Related Activity Group					
	Related to initial assessment			Related to recourse		Any reason
	15 points or more at assessment	Medical reasons	Clerical assessment	After appeal	At reconsideration	
<b>Caseload</b>						
Mental	102,600	4,000	5,900	44,100	22,200	<b>178,700</b>
Physical	141,000	24,100	6,700	52,400	31,300	<b>255,700</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>243,600</b>	<b>28,100</b>	<b>12,700</b>	<b>96,500</b>	<b>53,500</b>	<b>434,400</b>
<b>Percentage of subset caseloads</b>						
Mental	57%	2%	3%	25%	12%	<b>100%</b>
Physical	55%	9%	3%	21%	12%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: The figures are derived from administrative data held by DWP and assessment data provided by Atos Healthcare.

**Notes:**

(1) The table covers ESA claims starting between October 2008 and February 2012, including actions on these claims up to August 2012. This analysis presents information on new claims for ESA only. It does not contain incapacity benefits reassessments to determine eligibility for ESA.

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(4) Cases where the primary medical condition is missing are excluded.

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